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The U.S. is outgunned

By Stanley A. Blumberg and Gwinn Owens

If the Russians were to invade Western Europe, "the limited American technological superiority ... is so far outweighed by the disproportionate strength of the Soviets, that there are many, including myself, who believe that the U.S. forces, because of numerically disadvantaged position would be attrited in probably two or three days."

This is the alarming prediction of a military man who has been directly involved for 33 years in monitoring the Russian arms buildup—Maj. Gen. George F. Keegan, former chief of Air Force Intelligence. Here are other Keegan assessments of the U.S.-Soviet Union military balance:

1. There is not now an American strategic weapon "that could be delivered with sufficient accuracy and yield to be able to destroy or damage, say, 1 percent of the Soviet nuclear weapons stockpile. This would survive the most severe attack we could launch upon them."

2. Military forces in the Soviet Union trained for civil defense alone "in my conservative estimate today—and this is the first time this has ever been revealed publicly—number somewhere between 3 and 5 million troops."

3. At the time SALT II was being negotiated "the Soviets were already secretly developing and testing 15 major new intercontinental ballistic missile systems—a fact that was never made public for reasons that I consider to this day to be almost treasonable. ..."

4. The Soviet Union is developing high-energy laser and particle-beam weapons under a program "much larger than the Manhattan Project."

5. U.S. intelligence, over the 33 years of General Keegan's active service, has "been wrong in every single scientific prediction."

General Keegan's gloomy assessment of the ability of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to survive a Russian onslaught involves many factors—including relative nuclear deterrent strengths and the ability to call up reserves.

In both conventional and nuclear weapons, he asserts, the Warsaw Pact enjoys an overwhelming superiority over the NATO alliance. "We are outclassed by nearly 6 to 1 in nuclear warheads, in air defense weapons at about 7 to 1, in stockpiles of ammunition by almost 100 to 1, and in tanks the Russian advantage is almost 4 to 1." General Keegan's estimate of the Soviet edge in short- and long-range tactical aircraft is about 4 to 1.

Furthermore, this alarming disparity is compounded by the Soviet Union's ability quickly to man standby, completely equipped divisions. "Their reserves can be called up in a matter of a few hours and within 30 days the Soviets can field over 200 fully manned divisions."

Responding to a question about what NATO could do in the same 30 days, General Keegan's response was grim. "Nothing, surrender or retreat."

Why haven't the Soviets taken advantage of this situation? General Keegan attributes their hesitancy to the existence for more than 25 years of America's impressive, however relatively small, nuclear deterrent. Moscow believes that an attack on Western Europe could expose Soviet cities to risk of a massive counter assault by U.S. nuclear weapons.

In the meantime, according to the general, the Kremlin has launched the most intensive psychological assault on the West in recorded memory. This barrage of words is aimed primarily, but not solely, at Western Europe. Its purpose is to encourage unilateral disarmament under pressure from ordinary people who are genuinely alarmed over the prospects of war, but who impose a unilateral set of conditions and restraints that are operative only on the free world and not upon the Soviets."

Why should either side increase its nuclear arsenal, when the capacity for "overkill" has been reached?

"Overkill," as he sees it, "is one of the great myths that has now excited the free world and is propounded by virtually every scholar, every newspaper and every editorial board in the West. This mythology has made it very difficult for the U.S. to do what it must."

He agrees that "in terms of weapons available to both sides, there is now enough nuclear power to ruin the societies that now exist. But, he asserts, in terms of operational reality this is not the case. The Soviets never accepted the American strategy of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) and in the period around 1969 to 1971 undertook a number of measures to nullify this U.S. concept.

"The Soviets began systematically to harden their underground storage sites, more than 400 of which are at the absolute top of America's list of targets assigned by the White House to our strategic forces. The missile silos are placed so deep underground and are covered with so much dirt and concrete that they are practically impervious to American bombs."

Since 1970, General Keegan believes, close to 99 percent of the Russian nuclear weapons have been made virtually invulnerable.

The details of construction and the number of missile silos is based on hard intelligence. "With the help of defectors who had actually helped to construct the Soviet missile silos and a couple that now reside in New York City who helped design them, we learned, much to our shock, that the new generation of Soviet silos was several times harder than its American counterparts."

America's second most important target for retaliation is the Soviet Communist Party leadership. In the late 1960s work began in every major city in the U.S.S.R. to construct the largest underground shelters, and the most survivable, ever built to cope with nuclear war. Based on information gathered since the late 1970s, one of these shelters is a giant steel-welded sphere buried under several hun-

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